1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

563
692 ment, who approves appointment to Sharia and Qadi positions.

5. Structure and Function of the Coptic Church among the Amhara.

795 The importance of the Coptic Church of Abyssinia on the life of every Amhara, of all classes, rural or urban, can hardly be exaggerated. To the Amhara, "Amhara" is synonymous with Abyssinian Christian; and the
[198] liturgical language used in the church, "Geez", with "language of the free". The term used for their religion is "täwahedo", often shortened to "towado", meaning "orthodox".

To the Amhara, his church is so closely connected with his attitudes to his country, his nation, his ethnocentrism, that the severance of ties with the mother Coptic Church of Alexandria, in 1948, passed almost
[779] unnoticed. Only church scholars are aware that, as part of the larger Coptic church, the break with the Western church occurred after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., ostensibly because the Copts insisted on complete fusion of the person of Christ, refusing to accept the "union, but not fusion of Deity and human spirit" of the non-Monophysite faith in the formula he pronounces when
[788] slaughtering a sheep or ox: "In the name of the father,
[224] the son, and the holy ghost, one divinity." The pious hunter will hasten to the wounded gazelle to pronounce the formula before the animal expires, then finish it off by cutting its throat

A. The Structure of Church Organization.

346
778 a) The Church buildings and design.

The traditional church building is round, designed on a pattern of three concentric circles. This combines the round pattern of the African hut, though much larger in this case, with the functional design of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Like the latter, each church has a Holy of Holies ("qeddesta qeddusan"), a closed inner sanctum, which may be entered only by upper priesthood
[782] or the day's officiating priest. He carries burning and smoking incense in a metal or clay censer, while he marches around the sacred wooden tablet, the "tabot", located there. On the tabot, which may not be seen by layman's eyes, are inscribed, in Geez, the name of the saint to whom the particular (parish) church is dedicated, plus magical names of angels and geometric symbolism and phrases from both the Old and New Testament. The "tabot" represents symbolically the Ark of Moses kept by the ancient Israelites in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem

346 The second circumference, the "mäqdäs", can be
[788] seen from the outside through several doorless openings. Here the priests perform the eucharist, hidden from the public gaze by portable white linen screens. The "maqdas" is restricted only during services.

796
346 Within the third, walled-in circumference, the "taza", called also "geńe mahlēt" (lit. reciting-place of devotional poetry), the chorister-scribes ("dābtära") congregate while they chant devotional poetry and other

778 the frame, are now often cut from modern tin cans.

The ceremonial drinking cup used in the eucharist is the "ṭewa", usually made of metal. But if used in the "mäḥabber" communal sodality outside the church, it is often of horn or clay, about 4½ inches high, 5 inches diameter at top, 1½ inches at bottom. On the latter occasion it is filled with barley beer or "berz" (honey-water). This is given the peasant at plowing time to [788] confer blessing upon him, thus called "maras baggo" (for spring plowing).

Other equipment belonging to the church may be a wooden pulpit for reading (not preaching), some tin [373] oil-lamps or the old wick-like candles (called "twär"). 778 Very important are the drums, huge affairs carried by 534 the younger dancers during worship, suspended from shoulder straps. The barrel-like "nägarit", of which the average church has three (or must borrow them), usually has a height of at least 30 inches, a diameter of 15 inches. It is made of "wanza" wood (olive or other hardwood), with tanned oxhide moistened and stretched tightly across both ends. The drummer operates it with the flat of his fingers and top of flat palm. Another type is the "kabaro" drum, in which one end is bigger than the other. The drums and the swaying maqomya sticks keep time during the chanting. Trumpets are used only for parades, to herald the march, but not in accompaniment.

778 When not in use, most of these utensils are lock-
344 251 ed in a little treasure house, called "bätalehem" (in

796 holy day of the year, "Mäsqäl", Feast of the Cross, on the 17th, and all who can prepare new garments. The countryside is freshly washed from 3 months of rains, and the sun is welcomed. It seems as if nature herself is beginning a new year, another annual cycle.

From St. John's Day, the first day of the year, children begin to gather the plentiful wildflowers, and to bring them to kinfolk across brooks which are again [B24] passable. These bouquets of daisies, "Mäsqäl abäba" i.e. Mäsqäl flower, are considered "engutatash" (lit. take this tribute). This symbolism is linked to the first plant brought by the dove to the ark of Noah after the floods, which plant is said to have been the flower "engecha"; others say it is because King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba a pearl of the type "enqwe".

In return, the children expect promises of gifts of new clothing for the Masqal feast. Even adults give "gursha" gifts to each other, of food or other items, and the increasingly generous sunshine and raised level of emotion inclines to generosity. Elders and old women who have turned nun bless every visiting kinsman with the [788] formula:

"Blessed be He, (who) from time to time (one year to the next) has let you pass (in good fortune)."

796 The "Mäsqäl" Feast of the Cross, in Abyssinian 776 church tradition, dated back to an early Christian Queen "Eleni" (Helena) who sponsored an expedition to Palestine to seek the true cross of the curcifixion. When she found it, she decided to announce the joyous news to her

764 personal belongings such as shamma, horncup, oxhide bed-cover.

765 The tăzkar is the memorial feast 40 days after death, on which, under favorable conditions, the soul is believed to be freed from purgatory. Preparations for this feast are made almost as soon as the funeral is over. Kinfolk and neighbors bring food and drink, but despite that, tazkar feasts are often costly, far beyond the economic means of poorer families. Money must be given to the priests who recite the "fetăt", the prayer for absolution. It is the responsibility not only of direct descendants, but of the entire kinfolk to arrange for a "tăzkar", and it is a great shame when a person has no tazkar. No tazkar is made for unbaptized babies; for violaters of the fasts of Wednesday, Friday and lent; for suicides. Also, when a person dies what is considered a particularly unnatural death, by drowning, fire, lightning, etc., the priests have to decide whether a tazkar can be held, or whether the death was some special punishment for some great capital crime that had gone undetected.

d) "Saluting the church", and Private Communion.

● 788 Though lay individuals do not usually participate in church worship, going to the "bětă kristyan" (church) is a formal affair. The shamma is redraped when entering the churchyard, so as to form a cross-wise fold over

788 the chest. The church is then "saluted" by kissing the wall, a ceremony called "sälam" in Geez. If the person wears sandals, he must remove them before entering the church itself.

[211] On the path near the church, or leading to it, there is often a conical pile of small rocks. This may indicate a church on a nearby hilltop, and this pile, "mäsaläamiya", functions then as a poster of salutation. If the passerby is in a hurry on another errand, he may simply bow deeply in the direction of the church instead of going there to kiss the wall. In modern times truck-drivers will bow in that direction without stopping.

794 The individual layman usually belongs to a private sodality that holds private communion together. But he may, more informally, invite some personal friends on his personal Saint's day, especially his namesake's. Since this informal private communion is cheaper, costing only the price of a jar of beer and some roasted grain, it is more popular among the poor than the formal "mähabber" sodality. The informal private communion, called "zekert", is shared only by men, uses no drummer, no expensive wheat bread, no collection for a common purse, and usually only the personal confessor is invi-
[554] ted from among the priesthood. But the zekert cannot be used as a means of gaining social prestige.

795 e) Religious Syncretism.

Surrounded by Muslim and "pagan" religions, and

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course know what is going on, ignore the whole matter, just as they ignore the Zar worship.

Parallels to such religious syncretism are found not only in Egypt, but also in Syria, where Christian women go on short-range pilgrimage to the tomb of "weli" saints and smear mud from holy springs on their faces on a certain day of the Christian religious calendar.[79] This takes place in rural areas of Homs, but even near Damascus Muslims take part in celebrating the day of the Feast of the Cross in September.[80] Just as in visits to the tomb of water saints in Muslim Algeria,[81] the pilgrimage to Sheykh Abader is believed to bring on the light rains, which usually begin about that time, making early plowing and a good harvest possible. This is equally desired by both Muslims and Copts, just as individual good health is desired by both. Perhaps this unexpressed recognition explains the paradox of this religious syncretism.

f) The Church and the Present National State.

Three phases can be distinguished in the recent relations of the Abyssinian church and the Amharic "Solomonic Dynasty" which the church returned to power in the 13th century but which now attempts to modernize

79. Gaulmier, J.: Pèlérinages Populaires à Hama. Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales, 1931, Vol.1, pp.137-152.
80. Tresse, R.: Usages Saisonnières. Revue d'Etudes Orientales 1937, pp. 1-4; Lecerf & Tresse: Les Arada de Hamas. EEO, 7-8, pp.236-264.
81. Probst-Biraben, J.H.: Pour La Pluie de Printemps en Algerie. An Terre d'Islam, 22, 1942, pp. 264-272.

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by Admiral Sir William Hewett with King John in 1884, expressly provides that "H.H. the Khedive engages to grant all the facilities which H.M. the Negusa Negus may require in the matter of appointing Abounas for Ethiopia".

His is the power to crown kings, and no priest can be ordained without him. He officiates at all the big religious festivals, and his influence in the councils of state is reported to be considerable.

Mr Winwood Reade, in his book *The Martyrdom of Man*, states that "by way of blessing he (the Abouna) spits upon his congregation, who believe that the episcopal virtue resides in the saliva and not as we think in the finger-ends". I am bound to say we never saw or heard of this particular form of benediction while we were there, but even if it were so, it would not be so very surprising in view of the fact that, as everyone knows, at the baptism of children Roman Catholic priests to this day moisten their thumbs with their saliva and touch the child's nostrils therewith when they are baptizing it.

Up to the time of King Abreha, when the conversion of the country to Christianity took place, the head of the then existing religion was in accordance with Mosaic practice the High Priest. The nomination of a Bishop or Abouna followed, and functions were divided between the two, the Abouna being regarded as the chief in matters of religion proper, settling all questions of dogma and theology, whilst the High Priest controlled the Church staff and property. A further functionary known as the *Itcheque* was created in the thirteenth century, and duties were divided amongst these three up to the time of the Emperor

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CHAPTER XVI

THE NATIONAL CHURCH AND RELIGION OF ABYSSINIA (*continued*)

346 BRUCE wrote that there was no country in the world
111 *where there were so many churches*, and I have seen an estimate which I should think was well under the mark —of 3000 for Shoa, 1100 for Gojam, and 2600 for the districts of Gondar and Axum. For even small villages have two or three churches each, and it is a popular axiom that he who has erected a church has atoned for every sin. And to each of this legion of churches are attached many priests who live in remarkably simple—to put it mildly—accommodation in the precincts.

346 The buildings themselves are quite unpretentious, being small circular erections built of the stone that abounds everywhere in the country, covered with pointed thatched roofs surmounted by a cross on the points of which ostrich eggs are generally impaled. The Abyssinians show a considerable measure of reverence
• [788] to their churches, outwardly at all event. I have frequently seen men of importance stop their retinue when passing the church, dismount, and kiss the earth.

The principal modern church in Abyssinia is that of St. George, the patron saint of Abyssinia, at Addis Ababa. It is a stone-built edifice, octagonal in shape, surmounted by a large central dome; it is of no particular style of architecture, though it approximates to the Greek, and externally it is not very pleasing to

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
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the eye. Its beauty was not increased by the addition of a corrugated iron annexe for the purpose of seating some of the foreign guests at the Emperor's coronation.

The Abouna was good enough to arrange for us to visit the church, and we were received with ceremony by a number of priests, who were exceedingly kind and enabled us to make a thorough inspection, and even allowed us to take some photographs (which unfortunately, owing to the bad light, did not come out). They showed us everything with great enthusiasm and begged us to return "when a great feast was in progress". The building consists of three portions, a sort of outer gallery, an inner court, and finally the Holy Place or Holy of Holies, an inner chamber in the centre of the building in which rests the *Tabot* or representative of the Ark of the Covenant to which only the priests are allowed access.

The priests threw open the doors of the Holy Place for us to see in; it contained a kind of altar where the Sacraments are kept, and was surrounded by priests in very gorgeous vestments, burning incense and holding big crosses and crucifixes.

In one of the galleries a service was proceeding. Two priests were beating with their hands very big drums made of wood and hide; many others were shaking their curious little brass cymbals; and all were chanting, swaying their bodies, and slowly waving their praying-sticks. The time was really good, and the chant was rhythmic and tuneful, and not at all unmelodious.

The galleries were profusely decorated with huge life-size paintings depicting mainly scenes from the Scriptures, scenes from the life of Christ, the miracles, etc.; one dreadfully realistic picture of the Massacre

*278 222 iron, or in the "Arab" style, or the product of Falasha smiths, that it be double-edged, or have a handle of horn or some exotic wood. Similarly, recipes requiring roots may state that they be dug with a spade of specified characteristics, or with a digging stick of special wood. As for the gatherer, in some recipes, he is a virgin boy, in others naked or facing east. [801] Circumstantially, recipes established the day of the week on which the herbal may be obtained, and numerological details, such as the number of locations from which a particular herbal is to be gathered, and the number of samples to be taken from each place. [788] Finally, the gatherer may be required to recite, and perhaps repeat, a designated common prayer before cutting or digging the botanical.

+278 824 Once gathered, medicaments must be processed using the equipment and following the procedures specified by the recipe as being necessary for releasing the healing powers from their botanical confinement and for guarding them from dilution or loss. Botanicals may be required fresh or dried, crushed or ground or whole, soaked or decocted or simply mixed with other medicaments, strained through cloth or not further refined. Occasionally, recipes direct that medicaments be cooked with mead or distilled spirits, but it is the liquid (or tincture) which is discarded. In other recipes, botanicals, particularly leaves, require no processing other than being chewed or